

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

April 15, 2002
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Marshall, Deputy Mayor Degginger, Councilmembers Creighton, Davidson, Lee, Mosher, and Noble

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Mayor Marshall opened the meeting at 6:02 p.m. and announced recess to executive session for approximately one hour to discuss one item of potential litigation, one item of pending litigation, and one personnel matter.

At 7:35 p.m., the meeting resumed and Mayor Marshall apologized that the executive session took a little longer than anticipated.

2. Study Session

(a) Potential Parks and Open Space Bond Discussion

City Manager Steve Sarkozy noted that the potential for a parks and open space bond issue was raised by Council last year. The City's last bond issue for parks and open space acquisition and development was in 1989. A subcommittee of the chairs and vice chairs of the Environmental Services Commission and Parks and Community Services Board was established by Council to identify opportunities for a parks and open space voter initiative. In October 2001, the subcommittee recommended moving forward with a voter initiative and Council concurred.

Mr. Sarkozy said the purpose of tonight's agenda item is to discuss financing options, survey results, and potential parks and open space acquisitions. Staff plans to return to Council on April 22 and April 29 for further discussion.

Interim Finance Director Gary Ameling reviewed financial information regarding a potential voter initiative. State law allows cities and towns to levy open space and parks bonds for up to 2.5 percent of the assessed valuation of the city or town. This percentage of Bellevue's current assessed valuation is approximately \$493 million. Bellevue's debt represents only two percent

of the \$493 million debt capacity. The average percentage of household income dedicated to Bellevue's debt service is approximately one-tenth of one percent. The debt will be repaid by 2009 if there are no new bond issues.

Mr. Ameling noted Graph 5 on page SS 2-7 of the packet, which reflects the percentage of household income required to pay existing voted debt plus potential new voted debt at the \$45 million, \$90 million, and \$135 million levels. Levy amounts at the \$45 million and \$90 million levels are consistent with what property tax payers have historically contributed toward voted debt. Graph 7 illustrates that the \$45 million, \$90 million, and \$135 million debt scenarios would use 7 percent, 14 percent, and 22 percent of Bellevue's debt capacity, respectively.

Councilmember Lee questioned what would happen if the city's assessed valuation decreases. Mr. Ameling said staff's assumptions include that assessed valuation will grow at 5.4 percent, which equates roughly to the average annual increase over the past 10 years. Household income is expected to increase 5.2 percent annually based on historic trends since 1979. Mr. Ameling said if household income increases at a slower rate, assessed valuation will also likely increase at a slower rate. Therefore, the percentage of household income needed to service the debt would not be a noticeable increase.

Responding to Mr. Mosher, Mr. Ameling confirmed that a new bond could be structured in a way that would essentially maintain the current levies paid by taxpayers.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran reviewed the survey findings summarized on page SS 2-10 of the packet. According to the survey, 67 percent of residents visit a Bellevue park six or more times a year and 80 percent said they are inclined to support future bond issues for parks and open space acquisitions and development. Approximately 71 percent of residents expressed support for paying \$50 in taxes per year, which would support a \$45 million bond issue, and 58 percent are willing to pay up to \$150 per year to support the \$135 million bond issue option. In terms of preferences expressed in the survey, residents cited preserving the natural landscape along trails and roadways as the highest open space priority. A teen center and neighborhood parks were identified as the top park development priorities.

Utilities Director Lloyd Warren said past bond issues have focused on parks and open space acquisition, reflecting Bellevue's commitment to environmental stewardship. He noted a list of potential parks and open space acquisitions geographically distributed throughout the community (Page SS 2-11). The estimated cost of these acquisitions is \$35 to 50 million.

Mr. Foran referenced the list of 18 potential park development projects. Noting the time, Mayor Marshall recommended that Council continue the discussion later in the evening.

Mr. Creighton announced he would need to leave at 8:00 p.m. and offered the following comments. He is in favor of presenting a mid-range bond issue to voters and encouraged a balance between acquisition and development expenditures. He expressed support, in particular, for improvements to Bellevue Botanical Garden and the completion of Crossroads Park.

At 7:58 p.m., Mayor Marshall declared recess to the regular session and noted that Council would return to the study session to complete discussion of the park development proposals.

The study session resumed at 9:00 p.m.

Mr. Foran said the list of potential parks projects includes one-time capital costs and estimated ongoing maintenance and operations costs. Council will decide whether to include maintenance and operations costs in the same or a separate bond issue.

In reference to the citizen who spoke against property tax increases during the regular session's Oral Communications, Mr. Mosher said the purpose of a bond issue is to determine whether a majority of voters are supportive of further parks acquisitions and development. He feels that citizens, not Council, should decide this issue.

Mr. Foran reviewed the list of potential park development projects beginning on page SS 2-13 of the meeting packet:

1. Neighborhood Parks – Development of neighborhood parks in six locations throughout Bellevue.
2. West Lake Sammamish Neighborhood Park – Development of Norelius property and Sunrise Park.
3. Trail and greenway connections – Expansion and improvements to trail systems in Richards Valley, Lake to Lake trail, Lewis Creek, and the Mountains to Sound/Coal Creek trail system and greenway.
4. Bellevue Botanical Garden – Expansion of existing visitor center and improvements to gardens. Will require matching funds from the Garden Society.
5. Mercer Slough Trailhead and SE 40th Street Boat Launch Parking – Development of trailhead and additional boat launch parking.
6. Complete Enatai Beach Park – Includes drop-off area, children's playground, picnic area, restroom expansion, additional parking, and improved beach access.
7. Parks Historic Resources – Restoration and educational displays at Fraser Cabin/Matsuoka Cabin in the Lake Hills Greenbelt and two log cabins at Robinswood Park.
8. Crossroads Park – Expansion of children's playground, addition of picnic shelters, landscaping improvements, and addition of interactive water play feature.
9. Sports field improvements – Construction of two lighted ballfields at Marymoor Park, installation of synthetic surface on two or three soccer fields to expand use, and improvements to athletic fields at school sites.
10. Teen Center – Construction of teen center.
11. Chism Beach Park – Redevelopment to include beach restoration, swimming area renovation, new restrooms, new parking, and landscape improvements.
12. Downtown Park – Completion of SE promenade and canal, terraced lawn, and major park entrance at 102nd Avenue. Additional improvements include paths, bandstand, additional parking, expanded children's play area, picnic area, active sports plaza, and additional restrooms.
13. Sports Field Complex – Development of two to four synthetic surface, lighted athletic fields with parking, restrooms, and park amenities.

14. Kelsey Creek Park Redevelopment – Completion of master plan, circulation improvements, farm house remodel, educational displays, and expanded children's play area.
15. Downtown Mini Park – Development of urban mini park at 110th Avenue and NE 2nd Street to include children's play area, gardens, water feature, hard-surfaced court, and landscaping.
16. Meydenbauer Bay Development – Completion of master plan, beach restoration, public access improvements, and expanded children's play area.
17. Community Centers – Construction of 35,000 to 40,000 square foot community center to include gym, fitness facilities, and meeting/classroom space. Potential partnership with Bellevue School District.
18. Indoor ice skating rink – Construction of indoor ice facility to include two full-sized ice surfaces, concession area, locker rooms, lobby, and spectator seating. Potential private/public partnership.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Foran said one-time capital costs for the projects listed is \$91 million and ongoing maintenance and operations costs total \$2.2 million annually. Dr. Davidson commented that this is more extensive than he had in mind.

Mr. Lee encouraged a balance of open space preservation and active recreation parks. He feels a community-wide master plan would help Council to select and prioritize appropriate projects. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Foran said in addition to the survey discussed earlier, staff has conducted extensive outreach activities as part of the process to update the City's Parks and Open Space Plan. Mr. Lee feels environmental mitigation activities associated with parks and open spaces should be budgeted separately.

Deputy Mayor Degginger thanked staff for the presentation. He agrees with Mr. Creighton's comment regarding the need to balance acquisition and development efforts. He questioned the costs of three items related to sports fields – two lighted ballfields, synthetic surfaces for soccer fields, and improvements to school sports fields. Mr. Foran said each item costs roughly \$2 million. Mr. Degginger requested a itemization of the Downtown Park elements. Mr. Foran will provide the information to Council.

Mr. Mosher appreciates the wide variety of projects identified. In response to Mr. Mosher, Mr. Foran said the proposed teen center could be located downtown. He said the South Bellevue Community Center under development will be multi-generational. Mr. Mosher likes the idea of multi-generational facilities and favors expansion of the North Bellevue Senior Center. Mr. Foran clarified that the Sports Complex item is a new idea for a dedicated sports field facility, as opposed to other items to improve sports fields throughout the community.

Dr. Davidson noted that the City's Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan has traditionally been based on the concept of three types of support: property taxes, sales taxes, and B&O taxes. He is in favor of offering a bond issue since one has not been presented for many years. He requested staff's guidance regarding items that could be scaled back at this time, with the potential for more funding in the future. He feels additional financial analysis will assist Council in its prioritization of projects.

Mayor Marshall complimented the map of potential parks and open space acquisitions (Attachment D) and requested a similar map differentiating types of projects such as acquisition, rehabilitation, new construction, and development. She is in favor of constructing two new lighted sports fields, but not necessarily in Marymoor Park. She would prefer to locate the fields in Bellevue. Mrs. Marshall is excited about the potential for a sports field complex and the development of Meydenbauer Bay Park. She is supportive of plans to expand North Bellevue Senior Center and emphasized the need for a senior center in South Bellevue. She encouraged a balance between acquisitions and park development in the overall strategy. She looks forward to working with the Council to design an acceptable package for voters.

Mayor Marshall thanked staff, the City's boards and commissions, and citizens for their work on this effort.

Mayor Marshall declared the meeting adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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